

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W

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Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3475

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 03027

EXDIS

FOR WISNER AND HOUGHTON

NSC FOR BRZEZINSKI AND AARON

FROM DICK MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: TALKS WITH OWEN

SUMMARY. WE RESUMED OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH OWEN AND COMPANY THIS MORNING, WITH LORD CARVER ABSENT FROM BRITISH SIDE AND AMBASSADOR BREWSTER PRESENT ON OURS. HAVING OUTLINED HIS OWN VIEWS YESTERDAY, OWEN WAS CLEARLY INTERESTED IN HEARING OURS, WHICH I OUTLINED AT SOME LENGTH AND IN DETAIL. I STRESSED IN PAR-

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TICULAR OUR CONCERN OVER A PRECIPITOUS EFFORT TO PUSH NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS AND THE NEED TO MAINTAIN OUR CONTACTS AND CREDIBILITY WITH PATRIOTIC FRONT AND FRONT LINE. OWEN REGISTERED OBJECTIONS ON SEVERAL ASPECTS OF MY ASSESSMENT ON HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED, AND MEETING ENDED IN INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF HOW WE SHOULD KEEP OUR LINES OPEN TO ALL THE PARTIES. WE ARE

SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH OWEN AGAIN AT 6:30 THIS  
EVENING (FEB. 23). END SUMMARY

1. HAVING GIVEN US HIS OWN VIEWS ON NEXT STEPS YESTERDAY, OWEN OPENED THIS MORNING'S SESSION BY ASKING FOR OUR THOUGHTS ON HOW WE MIGHT PROCEED. I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO POINT OUT AREAS WHERE OUR ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT SITUATION DIFFERED FROM HIS.

-- WE ARE LESS SANGUINE THAN BRITISH APPEAR TO BE THAT SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS A GOING CONCERN, ESPECIALLY GIVEN NATURE OF UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS.

-- EVEN IF PRESENT HURDLE OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS IS OVERCOME, IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN THAT TERMS OF AGREEMENT WILL BE FINALIZED OR IMPLEMENTED.

-- WE ARE FAR MORE DUBIOUS THAN UK ON PROSPECTS FOR DRAWING NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS AND UNCERTAIN THAT SMITH, MUZOREWA OR SITHOLE REALLY WANT HIM IN AT THIS STAGE.

-- WE ARE CONVINCED THAT REACTION OF FRONT LINE, INCLUDING KAUNDA, TO EFFORT ON OUR PART TO PUSH NKOMO IN WOULD BE STRONGLY NEGATIVE, RISKING OUR DECLINING CREDIBILITY WITH THEM.

-- IN SUM, WE SEE GREAT UNCERTAINTIES AND GRAVE RISKS WITH STRATEGY OWEN HAS SUGGESTED, PARTICULARLY HIS DESIRE TO ACT URGENTLY WITH KAUNDA AND NKOMO.

2. HAVING SAID THIS, I THEN TOLD OWEN THAT WE SAW  
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MERIT IN HIS EFFORTS TO STIFFEN SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA TO EXTRACT BEST TERMS POSSIBLE FROM SMITH, LOOKING TO EVENTUALITY THAT SALISBURY AGREEMENT MAY WELL BECOME A REALITY. I ALSO AGREED THAT WE SHOULD KEEP OPTION OPEN OF CREATING A PATH FOR NKOMO TO JOIN TALKS AT LATER DATE, BUT AGAIN STRESSED OUR VIEW THAT IT IS PREMATURE TO EMBARK ON SUCH A COURSE. WE ALSO SUGGESTED, AS LORD CARVER HAD IN YESTERDAY'S DISCUSSION, THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SALISBURY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY FORECLOSE POSSIBILITIES OF BRINGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTIES BACK TOGETHER AND MIGHT IN FACT ENHANCE THE PROSPECTS.

3. FINALLY I DREW ATTENTION TO WHAT IN OUR VIEW SEEMED MAJOR FLAW IN OWEN'S PROPOSED STRATEGY, NAMELY THE LACK OF ATTENTION TO THE FRONT LINE AND OTHER AFRICAN STATES. I POINTED OUT THAT ONE PRINCIPAL VIRTUE OF ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS WAS THAT IT PROVIDED US WITH

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Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3476  
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE  
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FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING THE AFRICANS. IF, AS OWEN  
SUGGESTED, WE ARE NOW MOVING TO SITUATION WHERE OUR  
PROPOSALS WILL BE PLACED ON BACK BURNER, WE WILL HAVE  
TO DEVISE SOME NEW STRATEGY FOR KEEPING THE FRONT  
LINE ENGAGED IN A DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO PRODUCE A SETTLE-  
MENT. FAILING THIS, THEY WILL BE INCREASINGLY TEMPTED  
TO VIEW MILITARY OPTION, WITH ATTENDANT RELIANCE ON  
SOVIETS AND CUBANS, AS THEIR ONLY ALTERNATIVE FOR MAIN-  
TAINING PRESSURE ON SMITH AND ALSO FOR KEEPING OUR  
ATTENTION.

4. IN THIS REGARD, I TENTATIVELY SUGGESTED TO OWEN  
A POSSIBLE DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND  
OURSELVES, WITH UK TAKING LEAD (AS OWEN HAS ALREADY  
DONE) IN ATTEMPTING TO STIFFEN MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE  
IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH SMITH, AND WITH US BEARING

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BRUNT OF CONTINUING OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE FRONT LINE.

I FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT MY GOING ON TO AFRICA TO MEET WITH ALL THE FRONT LINE AND NATIONALIST PARTIES PLUS SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT BE VIEWED IN THIS CONTEXT.

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY PRESENTATION, OWEN RAISED FOUR PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS. (A) ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AND HOW TO PROCEED IN GETTING NKOMO INTO THE SALISBURY TALKS, OWEN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CHANCES WERE NOT GOOD. NEVERTHELESS, OWEN WAS INSISTENT THAT EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE AND NOW. HE STRONGLY DOUBTED ARGUMENTS THAT NKOMO MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE TALKS AFTER INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS FORMED IN SALISBURY, BUT ADMITTED THAT HE WAS MINORITY OF ONE IN THIS VIEW WITHIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT IT COULD BE BOTH WASTEFUL AND RISKY TO SPEND OUR RESOURCES ON EFFORT TO BRING NKOMO INTO INTERNAL TALKS IF FRONT LINE, PARTICULARLY KAUNDA, WERE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED. HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING, HE SAID, A DIRECT, FRONTAL APPROACH TO KAUNDA AND THE OTHER FRONT LINE ON THIS ISSUE BUT RATHER AN EFFORT, THROUGH "PRIVATE AND COMPLETELY DENIABLE CHANNELS," TO TEST WHETHER THERE WAS ANY WILLINGNESS ON KAUNDA'S PART TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION.

IF KAUNDA'S REACTION WAS TOTALLY NEGATIVE, OWEN IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD ABANDON THE IDEA.

B. ON THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS, OWEN OBJECTED TO OUR SUGGESTION THAT HE APPEARED TO BE BACKING AWAY FROM THEM. THE PROPOSALS, HE SAID, WOULD NOT BE WITHDRAWN AND HE WOULD CONTINUE TO STATE HMG REGARDS THE PROPOSALS AS THE "BEST" WAY TO SOLVE THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM.  
(COMMENT: IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE OWEN HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN THIS LINE IN PUBLIC.) PRACTICALLY,

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HOWEVER, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF OUR PROPOSALS BEING ACCEPTED. THEREFORE OUR AIM SHOULD BE TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT LIES SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN OUR PROPOSALS AND THE TERMS BEING NEGOTIATED IN SALISBURY AND TO GET AS MANY OF THE PARTIES AS POSSIBLE SIGNED ON. HE STRESSED THAT IT WAS NOT HIS INTENTION TO SHIFT THE FOCUS OF OUR EFFORTS TO SALISBURY, WHICH WOULD AT THE VERY LEAST BE PREMATURE, AND HE HAD AVOIDED SUGGESTING THIS IN PUBLIC. RATHER THAN SUGGESTING THAT WE ATTEMPT TO BUILD ON THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT, THE LINE HE PREFERRED TO TAKE IS THAT WE SHOULD BUILD ON THE AREAS OF AGREEMENT.

C. ON MY SUGGESTED DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND OURSELVES (WHICH HE CLEARLY AND PERHAPS

WILLFULLY MISINTERPRETED), OWEN SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE VIEWED PUBLICLY AS AN END TO THE JOINT US-UK INITIATIVE. IT WOULD BE A MAJOR DECISION WHICH HE WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS PERSONALLY WITH SECRETARY VANCE. FOR ITS PART, BRITAIN WOULD MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH ALL PARTIES AND WOULD NOT AGREE TO DOWNGRADE ITS RELATIONS WITH ANY OF THEM. HE THOUGHT US WOULD BE FOOLISH TO OPT OUT OF ITS SIMILAR COMMITMENT TO DEALING WITH ALL PARTIES ON EQUAL BASIS SINCE WE WOULD BE SEEN TO BE LINING UP WITH THE FORCES OF VIOLENCE.

D. FINALLY, ON MY SUGGESTION TO GO ON ALONE TO AFRICA FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL THE VARIOUS PARTIES, OWEN STATED THAT IF A TRIP SEEMED DESIRABLE, IT SHOULD BE A JOINT UK-US EFFORT AND SHOULD INCLUDE CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES INCLUDING SMITH. HE WAS NOT PER-

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Z O 231843Z FEB 78 ZFF 4  
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SUADED, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH A TRIP WAS EITHER NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE.

6. I TOLD OWEN THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE OUR DIFFERENCES

WERE AS GREAT AS THEY MIGHT APPEAR. CLEARLY THE US WAS NOT BEING NEGATIVE ABOUT THE SALISBURY TALKS AND THIS WAS REFLECTED IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. (LONDON PAPERS ARE REPORTING PRESS SPOKESMAN COMMENT THAT SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS "SIGNIFICANT STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION," WITHOUT MENTIONING OUR CAREFULLY WRITTEN QUALIFYING PHRASE.) WITH REGARD TO OUR DEALINGS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES, WE WERE NOT SUGGESTING A PUBLIC DIVISION OF LABOR OR A PARTING OF THE WAYS BUT RATHER A RECOGNITION THAT EACH OF US WAS BETTER EQUIPPED TO PERFORM DIFFERENT TASKS. WE HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SHAPE DEVELOPMENTS IN

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SALISBURY BY STIFFENING MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE, BUT DO HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT ANY ATTEMPT TO GO BEYOND THIS LIMITED EFFORT TO MAKING APPROACHES TO KAUNDA AND NKOMO. FINALLY I CAME BACK TO OUR NEED TO CONTINUE OUR CONTACTS WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE FRONT LINE. PICKING UP ON JOHNNY GRAHAM'S SUGGESTION FOR TECHNICAL LEVELS MILITARY TALKS INVOLVING LORD CARVER AND PREM CHAND, I NOTED THAT THIS WOULD BE ONE WAY TO CONTINUE OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.

7. AFTER AN INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF HOW WE MIGHT HANDLE THE ACTUAL MECHANICS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES, WE AGREED TO CONSIDER THE ISSUES AT ANOTHER MEETING THIS EVENING AT 6:30.

8. COMMENT: OWEN WAS AGGRESSIVE IN DEFENDING HIS OWN PROPOSED STRATEGY AND IN RAISING OBJECTIONS (SOME OF THEM ARTIFICIAL) TO MY PRESENTATION. DESPITE THIS, I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE FELT VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE. HIS OWN ADMISSION THAT HIS VIEWS ARE NOT SHARED BY HIS COLLEAGUES, E.G. ON SUCH KEY POINTS AS THE TIMELINESS OF AN EFFORT TO MOVE NKOMO INTO THE INTERNAL TALKS, TENDS TO SUPPORT THIS. MANY OF THE COMMENTS HE OFFERED TODAY AS EXPLANATIONS OR ELABORATIONS OF THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED YESTERDAY ACTUALLY CAME THROUGH AS RETRACTIONS, AT LEAST PARTIAL ONES. AS A RESULT, WE MAY NOT BE SO FAR APART ON THE BASIC OUTLINES OF A STRATEGY AS IT INITIALLY SEEMED. NEVERTHELESS, THERE REMAINS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US THAT WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED, PARTICULARLY ON THE ACTUAL MECHANICS OF MAINTAINING OUR CONTACTS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES.

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A SEPARATE TALK I HAD WITH TED ROWLANDS AND TOM MCNALLY, CALLAGHAN'S POLITICAL ADVISOR, AFTER THIS MORNING'S SESSION HAS REINFORCED MY IMPRESSION THAT OWEN'S VIEWS MAY NOT BE GENERALLY SHARED THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT. MCNALLY, WHO HAS A LONG ACQUAINTANCE WITH AND KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICA, GAVE THE STRONG IMPRESSION OF SHARING SOME OF OUR DEEP RESERVATIONS ABOUT OWEN'S PROPOSED COURSE. I DID NOT WISH TO DRAW MCNALLY OUT TOO EXPLICITLY FOR FEAR OF BEING ACCUSED BY OWEN OF ATTEMPTING AN END RUN AROUND HIM TO CALLAGHAN. HOPEFULLY WE WILL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHERE HMG'S TRUE SENTIMENTS LIE WHEN WE MEET AGAIN THIS EVENING.

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
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**TAGS:** PDEV, RH, UK, US, (OWEN, DAVID)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/03619ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014